



Session update from Olympia

August 19, 2011



Pictured above: Senate Majority Leader Brown and Youth Involved in the Spokane Chapter of the Mockingbird Society.

Senator Brown spends the summer work period meeting with constituents in Spokane

It has been fantastic to be back in Spokane following the 2011 Legislative Session, and it has been wonderful to get to spend time with my son who is back home from his first year of college. I have been meeting with residents of the 3rd District and the region to discuss important issues and learned about some very interesting efforts going on in our own backyard. It is truly one of my favorite parts about being a State Senator. Here is a brief recap of some meetings and events I have been involved in recently.

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I was very pleased to attend and speak at the grand opening of the Community Health Association of Spokane's (CHAS) Market Street Clinic last Friday, which occurred during National Health Center Week. The Market Street Clinic

provides quality, affordable healthcare to patients regardless of insurance status. Ultimately, this drives down costs to patients and the broader community. CHAS provides affordable healthcare to more than 40,000 people in the Inland Northwest at their eight clinics. Since opening its doors last December, the clinic has seen more than 4,600 patients. Of those patients approximately 1,300 were uninsured, 2,100 on Medicaid, 500 on Medicare, and the rest were privately insured. In addition to family practice services, the clinic provides pharmacy, primary care, pediatrics and internal medicine.

Last week I attended a barbeque at Manito Park with youth from



the Mockingbird Society (picture above). These adolescents are involved in a statewide initiative where youth and alumni of foster care come together to focus on developing leadership and reforming the foster care system for the better. Members of this organization actively lobby on issues that will help make improvements. We discussed two issues the youth have been working on. One was working to ensure when foster kids call their caseworker they actually receive a call back within 24 hours. The other was [House Bill 1128](#) that they successfully helped pass through the legislature. The bill provides assistance to the more than 500 kids that transition out of foster care each year in Washington.

Representative Timm Ormsby, Representative Andy Billig, and I also met with Suzanne Delbene, the Director of the Department of Revenue, via video conference to discuss a taxing issue that is affecting Bloomsday and Hoopfest.

Finally, just yesterday I attended a lunch with teens from the Volunteers of America program [Crosswalk](#). Crosswalk is an emergency teen shelter in downtown Spokane that serves over 1000 youth. I was humbled as they thanked me and my 3rd District seatmates, Representatives Ormsby and Billig, for our work to continue funding for street youth which helps fund Crosswalk.

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This is just a sampling of the meeting and events that are keeping me busy during this interim work period. I look forward to keeping you updated!

A message from Senator Brown

The challenges facing the state during the 2011 legislative session were the most daunting I've seen in my nearly two decades in the Legislature. There was simply no painless way to cut \$4.5 billion from the state budget. Each line item in the budget is far more than a number — it represents children in our public schools, vulnerable adults and seniors in nursing homes, moms and dads struggling to pay the bills, and college students trying to afford tuition. And the effects of these cuts ripple through our communities, neighborhoods and families like a corrosive wave.

To address these unprecedented economic times, Democrats in the Senate broke with legislative tradition and invited minority Republicans to participate in the budget-writing process for the 2011-13 biennium. We knew the approach of pushing through a partisan budget would only result in months and months of political gridlock, postponing the necessary cuts and, in turn, requiring even steeper cuts to finally balance the ledger.

Our motto was “reform and reduce, but preserve and protect.” And we did. The final operating budget contains compassionate solutions for the present and is fiscally responsible for the future. In a brutal economic era when states across the country faced insolvency and eliminated public services left and right, here in Washington we reduced but maintained one key safety net program after another. We were able to preserve:

- ☐ The Basic Health Plan, which helps provide medical coverage for 37,000 people per month in 2012 and 34,000 people per month in 2013 while freezing new enrollments;
- ☐ TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), which will still help struggling families get back on their feet – and retain the Working Connections Child Care Program — while facing scrutiny and reduced expenditures;
- ☐ The Disability Lifeline, which will continue to help people who are unable to work due to a disability while reforming its cash programs; and,
- ☐ The Children's Health Program, which retains its essential commitment to provide health care to all kids regardless of

their immigrant status, within reduced expenditures.

Closer to home, I listened closely to feedback from town hall meetings, letters, emails and phone calls, and worked hard to:

- ☐ Keep the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture open;
- ☐ Provide \$35 million for the construction of a medical school at the Riverpoint Campus in Spokane (click [here](#) to read a guest column I wrote for the latest edition of INHealthNW on the Medical School in Spokane); and,
- ☐ Pass Representative Billig's legislation to protect our regions' most valuable environmental resource, the Spokane River, ensuring that it will be cleaner and safer.

This was a critical year for Washington, one in which many basic programs and services we Washingtonians consider essential faced elimination. Having reduced but preserved those programs, I look forward to returning them to healthier levels as we recover from the recession and our revenues resume. However, as many of you have already heard there is likely to be an unfavorable upcoming revenue forecast in September which means serious discussions about our schools, universities, and essential public services and how we fund them. I look forward to keeping in contact with you as this unfolds, and getting your valued input and feedback.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, you can contact me via email or through my Spokane office. Even in these very challenging times, it is a privilege and an honor to work for you, and I look forward to continuing to work on your behalf.

Sincerely,



Click [here](#) for contact information for my Olympia or Spokane office.